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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION

Letter dated 9 March 1993 from the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary of the First Committee

On behalf of the European Community and its member States, I have the pleasure to forward to you the enclosed copy of their working paper entitled "Rationalization of the work of the First Committee - agenda of the First Committee: a new look", and to request that it be circulated as a document of the First Committee.

(Signed) K.-A. ELIASEN

Annex

RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

AGENDA OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE: A NEW LOOK

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at promoting a discussion on a more consistent and coherent agenda for the First Committee of the General Assembly. A "new look" for the agenda of the First Committee could facilitate other aspects of rationalizing the work of the Committee, such as a better structured debate on specific agenda items, voting in clusters and merging of draft resolutions.

While a "new look" agenda for the First Committee should take the existing agenda as a point of departure, one could at a later stage also think of reallocating items from other Main Committees as well as from the plenary of the General Assembly.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part will deal with the existing agenda of the First Committee and explore whether it can be moulded into something more logical. Basically, this is done by taking all First Committee items of the upcoming forty-eighth session (A/48/50 for easy reference), as well as those due to re-emerge at future sessions, and rearrange them according to subject.

The second part of the paper is much shorter and will explore some possibilities for reallocating agenda items from other committees and the plenary, which might eventually result in the merger of some of the Main Committees (notably the Special Political Committee and the First Committee). The suggestions and considerations put forward in the second part of the paper are of a preliminary nature and are meant to give some food for thought on a wider exercise that transcends the responsibility of the First Committee.

I. THE EXISTING AGENDA REARRANGED: A NEW LOOK

The present agenda of the First Committee has no logical structure. Items dealing with the same subject-matter are not clustered. There is much overlap. Some "umbrella items" group together subjects that have nothing in common with each other. A more thematic approach would be to cluster items around a limited number of "head items", such as:

- Nuclear weapons;
- Other weapons of mass destruction;
- Conventional weapons;
- Transparency/confidence-building;
- Regional disarmament and security;

- Outer space;

- Disarmament machinery;

- International security;

- Related matters of disarmament and international security.

To illustrate this approach, all First Committee items for the forty-eighth session, as well as items likely to re-emerge at subsequent sessions, are reproduced below under the suggested "head items". This is, of course, without prejudice to the possible merger or elimination of specific items.

I. Nuclear weapons

(a) Nuclear tests

Item 65: Amendment of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water (47/46)*

Item 66: Comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty (47/47)

Item 71a: Notification of nuclear tests (42/38 C)

(b) Nuclear-weapon-free zones

Item 67: Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (47/48)

Item 68: Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia (47/49)

Item 80: Consolidation of the regime established by the treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) (47/61)

Item 82: Implementation of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa (47/76)

(c) Negative security assurances/non-use

Item 69: Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (47/50)

Item 72: Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons (47/53 C)

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* The numbers in parentheses refer to the relevant General Assembly resolutions or decisions (the latter indicated by (d)).

(d) Other nuclear issues

... Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (47/52 A)

Item 71c: Prohibition of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes (47/52 C)

Item 72b: Nuclear-arms freeze (47/53 E)

Item 71: Bilateral nuclear-arms negotiations and nuclear disarmament (47/52 K)

Item 74: Israeli nuclear armament (47/55)

II. Other weapons of mass destruction

(a) Chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons

Item 61: Chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons (45/57 B, 46/35 A, 47/39)

(b) Radiological weapons

Item 71b: Prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons (47/52 B)

Item 57: Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament (45/66)

III. Conventional weapons

Item 71h: International arms transfers (47/419) (d)

Item 75: Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (47/56)

IV. Transparency in armaments/confidence-building

Item 71g: Transparency in armaments (46/36 L, 47/52 L)

49th FC: Guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters (47/54 B)

49th FC: Implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures (47/54 D)

Item 58a: Reduction of military budgets (40/91 B)

Item 58b: Transparency of miliary expenditures (46/25)

V. Regional disarmament and security

(a) Regional disarmament (general)

Item 71f: Regional disarmament (47/52 J and 47/52 G)

Item 71i: Conventional disarmament on a regional scale (47/420) (d)

(b) Specific regions

Item 72c: Regional confidence-building measures (in Central Africa) (47/53 F)

Item 77: Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region (47/58)

Item 78: Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (47/59)

Item 76: Question of Antarctica (47/57)

Item 71: Confidence- and security-building measures and conventional disarmament in Europe (47/52 I)

VI. Outer space

Item 70: Prevention of an arms race in outer space (47/51)

Item 70: Confidence-building measures in outer space (45/55 B)

VII. Disarmament machinery

(a) United Nations Disarmament Commission

Item 73a: Report of the Disarmament Commission (47/54 A)

(b) Conference on Disarmament

Item 73b: Report of the Conference on Disarmament (47/54 E)

(c) United Nations disarmament programmes and initiatives

Item 72a: United Nations Disarmament Information Programme (47/53 D)

50th FC: Disarmament Week (47/54 C)

Item 72d: United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (47/421) (d)

Item 72: United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services programme (47/53 A)

Item 73d: Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (38/183 O)

Item 73e: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (39/148 H)

VIII. International security

Item 79: Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security (47/60 A)

Item 80: Maintenance of international security (47/60 B)

IX. Related matters of disarmament and international security

(a) Science and technology

Item 62: Scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security (47/43)

Item 63: The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields (47/44)

(b) Arms limitation and disarmament agreements

Item 59: Compliance with arms limitation and disarmament agreements (46/26)

Item 73c: Status of multilateral disarmament agreements (36/92 H)

(c) Verification

Item 64: Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification (47/45)

(d) Education and information for disarmament and peace

Item 60: Education and information for disarmament (46/27)

(e) Disarmament and development

Item 71e: Relationship between disarmament and development (47/52 F)

(f) Dumping of radioactive wastes

Item 71d: Prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes (47/52 D)

An agenda along the above lines would have several advantages. First, a more coherent and better structured agenda is in itself to be welcomed. Secondly, a "new look" agenda would be an expression of the integrated approach

to disarmament and international security, as for example advocated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era" (A/C.1/47/7). Thirdly, a new-style agenda would provide a good basis for rationalizing other aspects of the work of the First Committee. For instance, the debate on specific items during the First Committee could benefit from an agenda where related issues are neatly grouped together. The voting phase would also be more systematic. Furthermore, a "new look" agenda might actually encourage the merger of draft resolutions pertaining to the same item. A simple look at the agenda would reveal possible areas where drafts could be merged. Archaic and obsolete draft resolutions would be exposed more so than in the old agenda, thus increasing the pressure for their removal.

II. BROADENING THE NEW LOOK: POSSIBLE REALLOCATION OF ITEMS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES AND THE PLENARY TO THE FIRST COMMITTEE

The integrated approach to disarmament and international security could be taken one step further by reallocating relevant items from other Main Committees and the plenary of the General Assembly to the First Committee. As noted in the introduction, this would entail an exercise that goes beyond the sole responsibility of the First Committee and might eventually lead to the merger of some Main Committees. With this in mind, a number of tentative suggestions are put forward below, with the aim of giving some food for thought.

Certain items on the agenda of the Special Political Committee and the plenary of the General Assembly would be particularly suited for transferral to the First Committee. Items on the agenda of the other committees, such as the Fourth Committee, are not covered by this paper, but might in due course also be considered for reallocation.

Special Political Committee

The following items on the agenda of the Special Political Committee for the forty-eighth session could possibly be moved to the First Committee:

Item 83: Effects of atomic radiation (47/66)

Reallocate to First Committee item I (d), "Other nuclear issues"

Item 84: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (47/67)

Reallocate to First Committee item VI, "Outer space"

Item 90: Science and peace (47/423) (d)

Reallocate to First Committee item IX (d), "Education and information for disarmament and peace"

Plenary of the General Assembly

The following items on the plenary's agenda for the forty-eighth session could be moved to the First Committee:

Item 14: Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (47/8)

Reallocate to First Committee item I (d), "Other nuclear issues"

Item 22: University for Peace (46/11)

Reallocate to First Committee item IX (d), "Education and information for disarmament and peace"

Item 23: Programmes and activities to promote peace in the world (46/14)

Reallocate to First Committee item IX (d), "Education and information for disarmament and peace"

Item 37: Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic (47/74)

Reallocate to First Committee item V (b), "Regional disarmament and security - specific regions"

Transferring items to the agenda of the First Committee could in the first instance lead to an increase in the number of draft resolutions in the Committee. However, this effect would be negated by merging clearly overlapping drafts and eliminating irrelevant ones. A "new look" agenda could work as a catalyst in this regard.

The revitalized and streamlined agenda of the First Committee should, of course, be subject to periodic review.